

ACCREDITATION

This bulletin applies to the Private School Choice Programs which includes the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, Racine Parental Choice Program, and Wisconsin Parental Choice Program. The information below is intended to assist schools in understanding Wis. Stat. §§119.23 and 118.60 and PI 35 and PI 48 pertaining to accreditation.

In order to participate in the Private School Choice Program (PSCP), private schools must meet accreditation and, if applicable, preaccreditation requirements. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that it meets the deadlines and meets all requirements to continue in the program.

PreAccreditation

New Private School: A school that has been in continuous operation in Wisconsin for less than 12 consecutive months or provides education to fewer than 40 pupils divided into two or fewer grades meets the definition of a new private school according to Wis. Stats. §§119.23(1)(ai) and 118.60(1)(bn).

A new private school must be preaccredited for all grades to be offered at the school from an approved preaccrediting entity *no later than December 15* of the school year immediately preceding the school year the new private school intends to participate in the PSCP. For instance, preaccreditation must be attained prior to December 15, 2022 if the school wishes to participate in the PSCP during the 2023-24 school year. A notice from the preaccrediting entity must be received by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) *no later than December 15*. A school may apply for and seek to obtain preaccreditation from only one preaccrediting entity.

Note: A school fully accredited by an approved accrediting entity is not required to provide documentation of preaccreditation; however, the school must provide documentation of full accreditation to the DPI *no later than December 15*.

Existing Private School: A school that has been in continuous operation in Wisconsin for more than 12 consecutive months and provides education to 40 or more pupils or has three or more grades with enrolled students. This definition includes an existing private school operated or managed by a governing body participating in the PSCP if no payment has been withheld or no order barring PSCP participation has been issued to any private school operated or managed by the governing body in the three immediately preceding school years.

An existing private school new to the PSCP must obtain preaccreditation for all grades offered at the school by an approved preaccrediting entity *no later than August 1* before the first school term in which the private school begins participating, *no later than May 1* if the private school plans to begin participation in the PSCP with summer school. A school may apply for and seek to obtain preaccreditation from only one preaccrediting entity.

Note: A school fully accredited by an approved accrediting entity is not required to provide documentation of preaccreditation; however, the school must provide documentation of full accreditation to DPI *no later than August 1, or May 1* if offering summer school.

Applying for Accreditation

All private schools new to the PSCP must apply and have an accepted application for full accreditation by an approved accrediting entity *no later than December 31* of the first school year in which the private school begins participating in the PSCP. A letter from the accrediting entity must be received by DPI no later than December 31.

Achieving Accreditation

All private schools new to the PSCP must achieve full accreditation, *for all grades the school offers*, by an approved accrediting entity no later than December 31 of the third year following the first school year in which the private school begins participating in the PSCP. For example, a new school first participating in the PSCP in the 2019-20 school year must attain full accreditation prior to December 31, 2022. School must plan to meet all requirements for full accreditation and ensure that all grades the school offers are accredited **prior** to the deadline.

Adding Grades to Accreditation

Schools that are fully accredited must be accredited for all the grades the school offers.

If a private school is accredited for only elementary grades (kindergarten through 8th grade) or only high school grades (9th through 12th) and plans to add additional grades, for example, an elementary school adding high school grades, the school then must apply for accreditation for the additional grades no later than December 31 of the first school year that the private school offers instruction in the nonaccredited grades. The school must *send a letter to DPI no later than December 31* providing proof from an accrediting entity the school meets this requirement. The school then must achieve full accreditation by one of the approved accrediting entities prior to December 31 of the third year following the first school year the new grades are offered.

A school that is accredited only for elementary grades or only high school grades and plans to add an elementary grade or a high school grade must be accredited for the nonaccredited grade *no later than August 1* of that school year. For example, an elementary school accredited for grades K-5 plans to add grade six in the next school year, the school must be fully accredited for grade 6 by August 1 of the school year grade 6 is offered.

Accredited Schools

Failure to maintain continuous accreditation may result in the school's termination from the PSCP.

Annually, **prior to August 1**, fully accredited schools must provide a notice to DPI from the school's accrediting agency stating whether the school is accredited as of the date of the letter. The DPI will work directly with the accrediting agencies to obtain the accreditation notice. Schools are responsible for ensuring they are fully accredited by their accrediting agencies and are included in the notice, by reaching out to their accrediting agency. The accreditation notice must be completed by an authorized member of the accrediting agency and include all of the following information:

- The private school's name;
- The private school's address for each location included in the accreditation;
- The grades accredited; and
- Indication that the private school is accredited at the time the notice is filed

The department sends notification of receipt within 10 days of receiving the annual letter. A school must notify DPI immediately if its accreditation status changes. If a school learns that its accrediting organization is no longer an approved organization, the school must immediately notify DPI in writing and obtain accreditation from an approved accrediting organization within three years.

Approved Accreditation Entities & Contact Information

Approved Preaccrediting Entities: Under Wis. Stats. §§118.60(1)(cm) and 119.23(1)(ap) an approved "preaccrediting entity" means the Institute for the Transformation of Learning at Marquette University (no longer preaccredits schools), Wisconsin North Central Association, Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation, Independent Schools Association of the Central States, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation, National Lutheran School Accreditation, Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools, Christian Schools International, Association of Christian Schools International, and the diocese or archdiocese within which a private school is located.

Approved Accrediting Entities: Under Wis. Stats. §§118.60(1)(ab) and 119.23(1)(ab) an approved "Accrediting entity" means Cognia, Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation, Independent Schools Association of the Central States, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation, National Lutheran School Accreditation, Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools, Christian Schools International, Association of Christian Schools International, the diocese or archdiocese within which a private school is located, and any other organization recognized by the National Council for Private School Accreditation.

Approved Accreditation Entities & Contact Information

Cognia

9115 Westside Parkway
Alpharetta, GA 30009
Phone: 888-413-3669 ext. 5609
cognia.org

Association of Christian Schools International

7431 E State St #109
Rockford, IL 61108
815-282-7070
www.acsi.org

Christian Schools International

99 Monroe Avenue NW, Suite 200
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-419-8224
www.csionline.org

Independent Schools Association of the Central States

55 West Wacker Drive, Suite 701
Chicago, IL 60601
312-750-1190
www.isacs.org

National Lutheran School Accreditation

LCMS School Ministry
1333 S. Kirkwood Rd.
St. Louis, MO 63122
1-800-248-1930 ext. 1294
<https://www.lcms.org/schools>

National Council for Private School Accreditation (Full Accreditation Only)

PO Box 13686
Seattle, WA 98198
<http://www.ncpsa.org/>

The Diocese or Archdiocese within which the school is located

Listing of all Dioceses:
<http://www.usccb.org/about/bishops-and-dioceses/all-dioceses.cfm>

Wisconsin Association of Christian Schools

1840 Bond Street
Green Bay, WI 54303
920-499-5561
www.wacschools.org

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod School Accreditation

N16 W23377 Stone Ridge Drive
Waukesha, WI 53188
414-256-3221
www.wels.net

Wisconsin Religious and Independent Schools Accreditation

P.O. Box 154
Sparta, WI 54656
608-567-1208
www.wrisa.net